



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
-be the Church, everywhere



Photo by Microsoft Image Creator

“Courage is found in unlikely places.”
— J.R.R. Tolkien

“The courage to be yourself in a world constantly trying to shape you is my personal definition of power.”
— Kristen M. Elizabeth

“Courage is contagious. Every time we choose courage, we make everyone around us a little better and the world a little braver.”
— Brene Brown

Founded in 1916, we are an Open & Affirming (LGBTQ+), anti-racist, and justice seeking church that is part of the greater United Church of Christ.

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 09, 2026, 10:55 am

** Your whole self is welcome here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Prelude “Eternal Maker, Strong to Save” arr. V. Labenske
 Dawn Robinson, piano

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
One: May the peace of Christ be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Chiming of the Hour

Centering Prayer Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Let us center ourselves in prayer as we gather for this time of worship...
Loving and holy presence, who is nearer to us than our very breath, calm our wandering hearts and quiet the noises that have followed us into this place. As we settle, help us release our worries, the conversations we keep replaying, and the fears that cloud our vision. Open us to where your Spirit is at work, reminding us that we are not separate from your love. Awaken within us the light of Christ, waiting to be seen, trusted, and shared. In this hour of worship, help us become fully present to you, to one another, and to our sacred call in the world. And may we leave this place more awake and more ready to embody your love in the world. Amen.

Introit “There’s a Spirit of Love in This Place” M. A. Miller
There’s a spirit of love in this place. (2x)
You can’t see it, but it’s there, just as precious as the air.
There’s a spirit of love in this place.

There’s the presence of peace in this room. (2x)
In God’s tenderness is found peace that passes human bounds.
There’s the presence of peace in this room.

O, Alleluia, sing alleluia, we bless your holy name.
O Alleluia, sing alleluia, there's a spirit of love in this place.

* Call to the Heart

Ed Vickery

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping...

One: Come, all who are weathering difficult days or uncertain things

Many: **We come in search of the One who meets us in the storm.**

One: Come, all who carry fear, grief, questions, or burdens.

Many: **We come trusting that even a little faith can lead us forward.**

One: Come, not because you have all the answers, but because love calls us.

Many: **We come seeking the courage to awaken the Christ within.**

One: Come, for God draws near us amid life's storms.

Many: **We come to renew our awareness of God's presence right beside us.**

One: Come, let us worship the God who encourages, strengthens, and invites us to take that next faithful step.

Many: **Let us be moved this day to build God's kin-dom of peace, justice, and love.**

* Hymn 476

"My Life Flows on in Endless Song"
(How Can I Keep from Singing)

ENDLESS SONG

My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation,
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul—how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear, and hear their death knells ringing;
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?
In prison cell and dungeon vile, our thoughts to them are winging;
When friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing?

I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin; I see the blue above it.
And day by day, this pathway smooths, since first I learned to love it.
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing.
All things are mine since I am Christ's—how can I keep from singing?

Monthly Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Ourselves: I am part of the body of Christ, and therefore part of all that is good, holy, and true.

Neighbor: You are part of the body of Christ, and therefore part of all that is good, holy, and true.

World: We are part of the body of Christ, and therefore part of all that is good, holy, and true.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

Join me in prayer as we confess the ways in which we separate ourselves from God...

Transforming God, there are moments when it feels much safer to stay where we are rather than step toward what is just and life-giving. That sometimes we allow our worries, our doubts, or the weight of our struggles keep us from recognizing the courage and faith already within us. Awaken us to the gifts we carry and help us trust that sometimes even a little is enough. Amen.

Words of Grace

Ed Vickery

Beloved of God, hear this good news...

Throughout his ministry, Jesus helped people discover that they already possessed all they needed. He showed fishermen they could be healers and revealed to a woman at a well that she was worthy of living water. He reminded Zacchaeus that he possessed generosity and called upon his disciples to look within for courage. What if the grace of God is not something we need to earn, but something already at work within us, inviting us to trust that the love, courage, and faith of God is at hand. Amen.

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Alternative Lord's Prayer

Author Unknown

Loving God, in whom is heaven, may Your name be honored everywhere. May Your kin-dom come. May the desire of Your heart for the world be done, in us, by us and through us. Give us the bread we need for each day. Forgive us. Enable us to forgive others. Keep us from all anxiety and fear. For You reign in the power that comes from love which is Your glory forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (sung)

SANCTUARY

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.

With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

Modern Lesson

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Our modern lesson for today is from Mirabai Starr, who is an author, poet, and speaker on the sacred feminine and the wisdom of the mystics. In her book "The Showings of Julian of Norwich" she says...

Your God would never punish you for being a human being: this life itself is your penance...But it is also more than that. It is a crucible for transformation. Each trial, every loss, is an opportunity for you to meet suffering with love and make of it an offering, a prayer. The minute you lift your pain like a candle the darkness vanishes, and mercy comes rushing in to heal you.

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

Many: Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 14:22-33 (CEB)

Ed Vickery

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping... Gospel Lesson for today comes from Matthew 14:22-33, where Jesus sends the disciples on ahead to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and Peter walks on water. You are invited to join in reading along with the parts highlighted in dark, bold print.

Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. When he sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone. Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" They were so frightened they screamed.

Just then Jesus spoke to them, **"Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid."** Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water." And Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!" Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, "You...of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?" When they got into the boat, the wind settled down. Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "You must be God's Son!"

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

Many: Thanks be to God.

The Good News

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

“What If a Little is Just Enough?”

Invitation to Generosity

Ed Vickery

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing...

Over and over again, Jesus showed people that God's work begins not with abundance, but with the willingness to offer what we have. As we prepare our gifts today, may we trust that even the smallest act of generosity can become a source of hope, healing, and transformation in the hands of God. Let us now share our gifts, so they might move through its ministries, spreading more life and love into the world.

* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH, words by M. Luti

**Praise God whose mercies never cease;
Whose justice raises up the least;
And sits all creatures down to feast;
God's mercy is our hope and peace! Amen.**

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...

Gracious God, receive these gifts and the generous hearts from which they come. May they become refuge for those seeking safety, hope for those burdened by despair, and justice for those longing for liberation. Use them to strengthen your beloved community, to widen the circle of your love, and to help bring your kin-dom to life here on earth. Amen.

* Hymn 256 “We Live by Faith and Not by Sight” DUNLAP’S CREEK

We live by faith and not by sight;
No gracious words we hear,
From Christ who spoke as none e’er spoke,
Who still we know is near.

We may not touch Christ’s hand and side,
Nor follow where Christ trod;
But in confessing we rejoice:
Our Savior and our God!

Help then, O Christ, our unbelief:
And may our faith a bound
To call on you when you are near
And seek where you are found:

That, when our life of faith is done,
In realms of clearer light
We may behold you as you are,
With full and endless sight.

* Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response “Send Us Out” J. M. Talbot

Send us out to proclaim the reign of your kin-dom,
Send us out to proclaim and to heal,
Send us out with your power and your authority
To overcome and to heal the world.

Postlude “How Can I Keep from Singing” arr. B. Boertje

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The liturgy for today’s service was written by written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki.

Candid photographs and/or video recording share our work and witness and invite others into the fellowship of our congregation. Some pictures/video may be published in church print publications, on our website or on our official social media sites. If you do not wish to have your image published, please contact the church office by phone or email.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins
Ushers: Dave Shimberg, Shakti Subramanian
Greeters: Pam Shimberg, Ann Hooper
Refreshments: Pam Shimberg, Martha Battles

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT



Your generosity builds a more inclusive church!
Explore secure options available online
<https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/>

At Holy Covenant, we celebrate the many ways you share your gifts: through pledged support, spontaneous generosity, and acts of love in our shared life. If you'd like to give today, you can scan the QR code to access our secure online giving options. Thank you for sustaining the ministries of love, welcome, and justice we are creating together.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

- Aug. 09: Sandwich Build following worship TODAY!
- Aug. 16: Consistory
- Aug. 22: Project Linus blankie build drop-in 9am-4pm
- Aug. 30: Music Sunday; Sandwich Build following worship
- Sep. 06: IAF Church House Meeting following worship
- Sep. 13: Rally Day!
- Sep. 18 & 19: Congregational Strategic Planning Weekend
Please mark your calendars and plan to attend!
- Oct. 04 & 11: New Member/Inquirer Classes
- Oct. 25: Welcome Sunday Installation of New Members

A SIMPLER WAY TO SERVE!

All Sunday worship volunteer roles — refreshments, usher/greeter, reader, and more — are now in one convenient sign-up. No more hunting through separate lists! Join our ministries: <https://tinyurl.com/HCUCCSundays>

SOJOURNERS CLASS - ENGAGING ADULT EDUCATION

All are welcome and no preparation is required.

Next Sunday, we will watch a video with discussion following. Coming up, we will review a book *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler.

Join us Sunday mornings in the Conference Room or online via Zoom, 9:45am Meeting ID: 895 6175 8099 Passcode: 986788

MAKE A WILL FOR FREE

August is nationally recognized as **Make-A-Will Month**, and we're excited to share that the UCC Pension Boards partners with FreeWill to offer members and friends of the United Church of Christ the opportunity to create or update a will at **no cost**. Creating a will is one of the most important gifts you can give your loved ones. It provides peace of mind, ensures your wishes are clearly known, and helps protect those you care about by making difficult decisions a little easier during an already challenging time. Whether you're creating your first will or updating an existing one after a life change, now is a great time to take this important step. To create your free will sponsored by UCC Pension Boards through FreeWill, go to <https://tinyurl.com/2026Will>.

NAME YOUR FAVORITE HYMN/SONG

Our Music Minister, Jon Weddell is requesting to hear from you! We will use this information to help curate our music for the coming months. Feel free to include your favorite, even if it's specific to a season like Christmas, Thanksgiving or Easter. When entering the Sanctuary this Sunday, please take an index card and **list your name, your favorite Hymn/Song title, and tell us why it's your favorite**. Return it to the basket or drop it in the offering plate.

PROJECT LINUS' DROP IN BLANKET PARTY AT HCUCC

Sat. Aug. 22 | 9:00am - 4:00pm.

Join the Project Linus Blanketeers in a drop in day, Saturday, August 22, from 9am-4pm at Holy Covenant UCC! All are welcome. Materials and tools provided, and there's no experience needed! You can iron on ID tags, cut fabric, or crochet/knit. Whatever you feel comfortable doing! In 2026, there's been over 1,982 blankets made and donated to children needing a little comfort by providing them with blankets made with love. We now make beanie hats and octopi cuddlers for the babies in the NICU's!

<https://www.projectlinusmetrolina.com/>

**Please Remember in Prayer
Members**

Von & Melissa McQueen-Simmons and family in the recent death of both Von's aunt and uncle within the past three weeks.

Mel Andersen, Darline Batton, Kathy Habel, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Lee Parrish, Anita Taylor, Alice & Sally Phelan-Young

Friends & Family Members

Farug Brown Bey (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Joan Bowling (Kristen Fuchs), Lester Brigman (Lee Parrish), Randy & Tina Buie (Diane Neese), Kim Chamberlain (Kevin Decker), Cecelia Ciciollo (Dom Ciciollo), April Dawson, Mario Gaetani and family (Kristen Fuchs), Ann Garret (Holly Middleton & Dawn Schmitz), Ivory Garvin and family (Von McQueen-Simmons), Samuel Head (Benjamin Rudolph), Jack Hillard (Barbara Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Charlie Holt (Autumn Holt), Judson Hulse (Kristen Fuchs), Janet & Lon Kominski (Dawn Simmons), Renee Lewis (Martha Battles), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matty McKinnon (Joy Decker), Geraldine Mobley (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Tom, Beth and Ariel Rudolph (Benjamin Rudolph), Brenchia Thomas, Steve Thomas (Jeffery Edwards-Knight) Dave & Jennifer Ward (Jay & Cathy Whitley), June Washburn (Patrick Washburn), Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to
prayers@holycovenantucc.org.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

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